

May 27, 2014

Spokane Tribe of Indians
PO Box 100
Wellpinit, WA 99040

Federal Communications Commission

445 12th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20024

Attn: Chairman Thomas Wheeler
Commissioner Mignon Clyburn
Commissioner Jessica Rosenworcel
Commissioner Ajit Pai
Commissioner Michael O'Rielly
ONAP Chief Geoffrey Blackwell
OSP Chief Jonathan Chambers
WCB Chief Julie Veach
WTB Acting Chief Roger Sherman

Connect America Fund, Rural Broadband Experiments
WC Docket No. 10-90

Subject: Expression of Interest by the Spokane Tribe of Indians regarding establishing a Tribal Telecom with Fiber Optic and Wireless Infrastructure

Dear Chairman Wheeler, Commissioners, Office and Bureau Chiefs,

The Spokane Tribe of Indians ("STOI") hereby submits this letter as our expression of interest regarding participating in the Rural Broadband Experiments described in the Commission's January 31, 2014 Order, Reports and Orders, and Further Notices of Proposed Rulemaking in ON Docket No. 13-5, *et al.*

Our Tribe is located in Northeast Washington State with a reservation area of 159,000 acres and a population of 2,097 on tribal lands, 1,660 of which are Tribal Members of our total enrolled of 2,997. We realize the vital role broadband and communications play in successful economic development, efficient government and an improved quality of life. The economic influences for the Tribe in the past have been through gaming and the sale of Tribal Timber. The reservation and surrounding area lacks a quality base of diverse industries to bring in revenue; local demand of goods and services for the population are not being met with the

current industries and further contributing to local dollars bleeding from our local economy. Due to the ultra-rural location of our reservation, our Tribal entrepreneurs and small business owners have found it very difficult to start or grow a business on the reservation. We lack jobs and opportunities to build mindshare and human capacity to support our local economy and build a strong future; this results broadly in low income levels and a high percentage of poverty. Like many communities across Indian Country, our rurality also contributes to unfortunate social challenges as well. These issues mainly target our youth and young adult population, ranging from social isolation to drug and alcohol abuse.

Access to communications services, not just broadband, is poor at best on our reservation. Our incumbent provider provides only limited DSL coverage in one village with speeds that sit squarely at 1Mbps, while many residents still listen to the chirp of a 56k modem in an attempt to connect with the world. Cellular coverage is much of the same, where those who have a cell phone can often be found in their yard or specific areas in the community simply to check text messages or make a call. As a matter of fact, our coverage is so poor that a majority of folks simply do not subscribe to cellular service, as there is simply no point unless they travel off-reservation regularly. Our social services and law enforcement barely benefit from the service, where the value is almost non-existent for a quite expensive service. We could easily fill books with pages of stories like this, however we are pleased to see the FCC openly acknowledge this within the Order, where typical rural issues and challenges are "exacerbated" in Indian Country.

But our concern goes much farther than simply getting service or competitive service. This is about sovereignty. This is about serving our people when honest efforts and previous partnerships have failed to address the needs of our community, including connecting vital elements such as education, health services and public safety. Most recently, the Tribe was included in a USDA Broadband Improvement Program ("BIP") grant awarded to a competitive provider in Northeast Washington, however the project appears that it will not be coming to realization for the Spokane Reservation, leaving us to continue to struggle with no relief in sight, now 4 years further behind than we were in 2009.

As such, we applaud the FCC USF Transformation Order and the opportunity it provides Tribes like ours in promoting sovereignty by establishing a Tribal Telecommunications Carrier to fulfill the needs of our people, not only based on capital return on investment but social return on investment too; just as we provide other vital services like health and education to our Members, other local Natives and the community at large. Our Tribe is in the process of determining the feasibility of becoming an Eligible Telecommunications Carrier in order to provide communications services to our Members and residents, connect our anchor institutions and maintain our vital government services as they are required to operate almost completely using 21st Century technology. There is no reason for our continued suffering and neglect; these issues are clearly persistent and quite literally on the verge of being critical to all essential functions. By establishing a Tribal Telecommunications provider we will build a highly scalable (future-proof) infrastructure, offer fast and reliable service at affordable rates, and strengthen all aspects of life and opportunity for our community. We also believe in a Government-to-Government relationship at the Federal level relative to carrier status.

The Tribe was recently granted its FM Radio license by the FCC and is in the process of working to build the towers and supporting infrastructure for that endeavor. These same investments will be leveraged to bring in a robust and (eventually) redundant source of backbone connectivity to our population centers while providing a foundation on which to build a WiMAX system to broadband and voice service to our most outlying populations.

Conversely for our densely populated areas and those where it is cost effective and reasonable to deploy a land-based service, the Tribe will deploy near infinite scalable fiber optic network to the anchor institutions, tribal government, enterprises, small business and residential population. This Fiber-to-the-Home network will leverage existing relationships with our power utility provider, Avista, as well as other forward-looking infrastructure investments made by the Tribe such as the installation of conduit in newer developments on the reservation. Due to the existence of both compact population centers as well as substantial sparse distributions, we believe that the deployment of both wireless and fiber systems represents the most prudent and wise investment of funds by building multi-use, multi-benefit, long-term infrastructure that takes into account realistic cost-benefit factors.

Although we do not yet have our ETC study complete, it appears that we may be able to provide these services under a one-time capital investment subsidy with either little or no ongoing support, while providing our goal of up to 1Gbps to all, dedicated speed connections for anchors and shared type connections for end users at rates comparable to those available in our nearest metropolitan areas of Spokane and the Tri-Cities. Furthermore we may be able to endorse an investment range similar to that proposed in the list of "eligible areas" for our single Census Tract.

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CountyName	Stevens
EligibleHC	398
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Annual_Sup	\$205,430.89

The WiMAX infrastructure will also provide the ability for our public safety, emergency operations, public health, family services and municipal workers in the field to stay connected to our government LAN for connections to client and project databases as well as provide a communications conduit for field workers who may need access to emergency services.

We believe that our project can inform the FCC on various policy decisions, not only the multi-faceted IP Transition, but other areas of work such as education (E-Rate) and healthcare. Phone service is way too expensive for many residents, especially where a resident may require additional services like cellular and/or broadband the cost can be in excess of \$100-150, which most residents simply cannot afford, especially when compared to buying food or paying for power service. But access to affordable and reliable communications are not a luxury, it is a

requirement to even operate in the current environment; whether applying for a simple job or pursuing post-secondary education, the Internet is required. We saw this impact on a most broad basis when the healthcare system came in effect, a majority of our residents had to come to the clinic or another location with some internet just to maintain their healthcare coverage.

Our Tribal government is no different, our grant uploads and reporting time out on a regular basis, sharing small documents takes 5-10 minutes, the telemedicine equipment provided in to the Tribe continues to collect dust, and critically, in 2015 the Washington State Office of the Superintendent and Instruction ("OSPI") have required that all mandatory testing in K-12 is taken online, so we are currently discussing how we will bus our entire student body to a place with Internet classrooms where they can take these tests. Currently the connection is so poor that we schedule lesson plans around class or half-class times use of the Internet while restricting anyone from accessing during those times and blocking any and all personal data devices, which is the complete opposite of moving toward 1:1 technology ratios in school.

But coming back to simple phone service; in this age the costs to provide excellent phone service, especially over IP-based technologies, are mere fractions of what they used to be. The days of \$50 phone lines, though they still exist, are unwarranted in their cost and poor performance. Our Tribe believes this is one of the most exciting parts of the IP Transition; removing the cost barrier for even simple connections and allowing low-income and poverty-stricken residents the ability (or right) to have basic "Lifeline" type service and not making a decision based on survival. And we have a goal to deliver broadband service as a critical utility just as well. Although about 50% of our Tribal Members live on the reservation, many live "as close" as the City of Spokane, Coeur d'Alene or Tri-Cities, however many live in other states, either serving in the military or taking advantage of an education or job opportunity, and everything from basic phone service to broadband allows our families to stay connected. It allows our culture to stay alive and Members to participate in our government from afar. And it also enables those who have left the reservation to seek opportunity the ability to return and serve their community, such as helping our youth pursue education and opportunities related to Science, Technology, Engineering and Math. For a myriad of reasons, we fully endorse the IP Transition and hope to provide vital statistics and information into the policy-making process.

We have mentioned some of the most critical and commonly referred to government services; education, healthcare and public safety, however there are many other anchor institutions that need broadband to continue to operate, especially as the federal and state governments migrate to Internet-only interactions. The Tribe provides all of these services predominantly under our singular government, just as individual departments. These would typically be listed in other areas as separate anchor institutions with the goal or hope of connecting them all and gleaning the associated revenue. Within this project we will connect them all and achieve the revenue streams, while being able to continue to monitor the effects of broadband on these anchors which we believe is of particular interest to the FCC in informing policy decisions before the Commission. Additionally, we will to provide a target of 100Mbps guaranteed bandwidth with burstable capacity to 1Gbps with a future goal of a 1Gbps baseline and burst up to 10Gbps.

Our anchor institutions include:

- Community Services
- Courts & Justice
- Culture & Historic Preservation
- Economic Development
- Education & Higher Education
- Emergency Management
- Employment Office
- Family Services
- Health & Wellness
- Information Technology
- Natural Resources
- Planning
- Public Safety
- Roads & Transportation
- Vocational Rehab
- Water & Wastewater

Our project aims to include as many Tribal partners as possible just as we do under tribal health and education, for example; fiber backhaul connections and hosted end-user VoIP from the Jamestown Tribe, fiber optic installation and training from the Yakama Nation, billing and technical call center support from the Umatilla Tribe and offsite datacenter collocation from the Quinault Nation. We already have project partnership relationships with Avista Utilities and we will leverage and extend that relationship for this project. The benefits of jobs and opportunities in the establishment of a Tribal Telecom for STOI will extend beyond our borders, impacting other areas of Indian Country. Funding this experimental project also represents an investment that is full and complete, where this project is designed to be cost-effective enough to not require additional rounds of funding to complete a partially built experimental project.

Not only are we currently running the ETC study, we are also involved in a 12-Tribe broadband planning effort by the Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians ("ATNI"). This project was awarded by the Washington State Broadband Office as a grant, funded through the NTIA SBDD/SBI dollars allocated to each state. This project includes the creation of a full-blown "Broadband Plan" (aka Communications Strategic Plan) for each individual Tribe, spanning telephone, cellular, broadband and two-way radio such as that for public safety. The program has included a detailed needs assessment interview with every department director and key staff, Tribal Executives and Council as well as residential community surveys. This is combined with an infrastructure inventory to create a Gap Analysis, ultimately resulting in a set of solutions and a strategic plan relative to the specific needs identified for our Tribe including infrastructure, digital inclusion/digital literacy and funding opportunities. The strategic plan will include all of

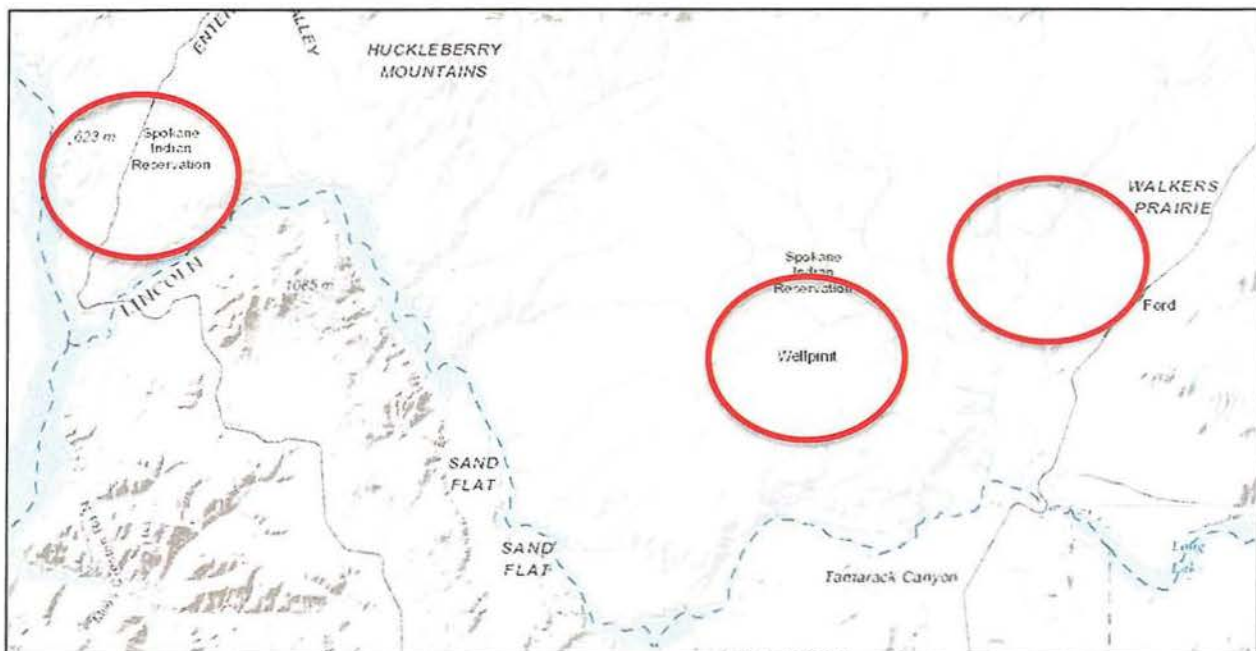
the communications needs and potential solutions, again, being of particular interest and value to the FCC under the IP Transition's multiple areas of research ranging from traditional telephony to advanced communications such as remote health monitoring. We will have fresh baseline data to compare directly against in the future to monitor the impacts. Both the ETC feasibility study as well as the "Broadband Plan" will be ready by May, in time for the anticipated release of CAF Rural Broadband Experimental funds in or around June.

Again, the Spokane Tribe of Indians commends the FCC on taking action to fundamentally evolve into the future through efforts such as the USF Transformation and IP Transition, taking into account the unique challenges of Indian Country and making a concerted effort to gain real-world knowledge of the effects of business and technology to inform coming policy changes. We also urge the FCC to consider and hold true Government-to-Government trust relationship between Tribes and the United States in issues of policy and regulation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Rudy J. Peone". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Rudy" being more prominent.

Rudy J. Peone, Chairman
Spokane Tribal Business Council



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